

KEEPING PACE

A Monthly Newsletter Devoted to the Darkroom Arts

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What's Happening to Our World of Art?

The changing world of photography.

The advent of the computer has forever changed the way commercial photography is done. No longer are we to be witness to the fine art that usually accompanied the billboards and magazine pages of the 1960's and 1970's. Today, the commercial photographer can purchase a large format digitized back for his large camera and produce a dye sublimation print for approval before the Litho house does its magic by producing screened plates ready to run. It boggles the mind. Pretty soon the new screenless (Raster) methods will eliminate forever the screen image as we now know it.

Is the current commercial work **art**? Perhaps.

It has as much of a chance of being considered "art" as the old commercial work did.

However, I could easily enter almost any image for consideration that I printed for Tom Kelley, Philip Halsman or Irving Penn. Their shots were so unique that they would stand up today as fine art without any reservation. This is still the criteria for fine art.

The print must reflect all of the emotion that the original artist had in mind.

Was I able to deliver my work to these three gentlemen without the fear of rejection? No I was not.

These three individuals had different sets of eyes and I had to make sure that in each case I was able to properly capture the image according to their eyes. They each has their own "aim points" and it took some time to discover what their "aim points" were. Each one was different. For instance, Tom Kelley wanted "life" in his images, Halsman wanted moody and

extremely sharp images that divulged a secret mystery about his subject's character. Irving Penn was (and still is) a master of illusion. His images were as he called them. "Moments in time." He was the most fastidious of all my clients. The advertising agencies art directors were notorious for their nit-picking a print upon delivery, until I also learned what their threshold was. Most of them were especially concerned with composition and producing an emotional effect.

Take a look at today's billboards and magazine pages. The fact that the images have been digitized is no excuse for poor workmanship. The "art" of my earlier days has just about disappeared. There are some exceptions, of course. **One group in particular, the latest Marlboro ads, are produced by scanning**

the original manipulated art work and producing digitized printed images on a water-proof plastic material in strips, and when completed, the strips are heat fastened together and a full size billboard print is completed. The final material is wrapped around and then stapled through the back onto the wooden base. Some of them look great. I said "some of them."

How is all of this new art form affecting us? The affect is almost subliminal. We are surrounded by all kinds of "art work" and are slowly becoming mesmerized by the work. The more we see this new art, the more we become accustomed to it, and soon we will not even see any real differences in what used to be and what is now being shown.

Our conception of photography has been invaded by the computer. I realize that the computer is here to stay. We are being bombarded with electronic photo magazines that were formerly truly photographic and not electronic. Most of the magazines have succumbed to this invasion. There are a few that have refused to curl up and die. It is these magazines that will keep fighting for the materials we need and continue to be true to our cause of fine art. The only real problem is money. All magazines operate on a

regular profit basis. The money is mainly derived from advertisers. The advertising of photographic equipment and materials now take a back seat to the new computerized systems. As a result, the magazines that cater to the "hand's on" enthusiasts are becoming slimmer and slimmer. We must hope that they do not go out of existence.

How can we keep alive the "hand's on" approach to fine photographic art? This is not a simple task. The first thing to be concerned about is the fact that fine art must be reproduced. Even more important is the fact that it must be shown.

Galleries must be aware that fine art is also here to stay. I don't care what kind of print is offered for viewing purposes, as long as it fits the criteria for fine art.

If you have a group of images that can conceivably be considered a "theme" then the task is to get it reviewed by a prestigious gallery.

If your field is black and white, make sure that your work is different and has something to say. Make the finest prints possible. Mount and mat them professionally and give your chosen gallery a chance to examine them and hope that they can be seen by the public.

Visit the galleries that specialize in showing fine photographic art.

Get to know the owners and their assistants. There are thousands of galleries and most of them specialize in showing and selling the "masters." To me, this is fine, but some of the old work is famous for historical reasons and not necessarily fine art. Showing the work of Matthew Brady and contrasting it with the work of Ansel Adams is just an example.

There are many "phonies" that seem to creep into all phases of art. This is especially true in painting, but it also exists in the photographic world.

I remember going to a showing, where the images consisted of Ciba prints made by placing a colorful shirt on the easel and using a filtered light source through the enlarger, exposing the shirt onto a sheet of Cibachrome paper. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was hoping to find a great photographer showing us his interpretation of an image, instead I had to look at this so called "artistic impression".

What really galled me was some of the feigning individuals that acted as if they discovered a new art form. Egads! I almost became ill.

Years ago a short film was produced where there was no diologue. It was the story of an "artist" that lived in a remote area of Alaska. He lived in a small community. The only way in was by boat or seaplane.

The small town boasted a mill that was capable of producing plywood. He purchased 2 sheets of plywood and some cans of household paint. He then proceeded to throw and splash at random, various colors of paint onto the 2 sheets of plywood. When they were dry, he then had them cut into various rectangular sizes. The best part is where a seaplane lands and ties up at a dock. A well heeled buyer exits the plane and proceeds to walk to the "art exhibition" at the dock. He studies the different abstract images and chooses three of them from a collection of about 16 images. He pays the "artist" and picks up his newly acquired masterpieces loads them into the seaplane and flies away. The last scene shows the "artist" kicking the remaining images into the lake. This is an example of how some people visualize art.

Is your field of endeavor nature photography? If the answer is yes, you will have much competition. What does it take to be a great nature photographer? Finding the scene is the first part of the process. This requires that you really see things. **An understanding of composition is a must.** Look at the works of others, not to copy them but to see

what there is that you can use in your own searching for images. The fine books by the many great photographers that have been able to master the black and white process should be an inspiration to you. Read the books and especially, look at the work. Unfortunately, most famous photographers are not good teachers. However, you only need to see their work to become inspired.

What it takes to be able to make a fine black and white print?

First of all is the image. The composition must be right or the whole thing will collapse. The subject matter must be conducive to the viewers taste. Millions of visitors have seen and photographed the magnificent view from the tunnel at Yosemite, but I don't know of one that approaches the depth and quality of the Ansel Adams print. You should know the zone system. A method that I used for years was to use a Weston light meter and I would measure the difference between the light and dark areas of the image and determine the gamma of development required in order to make a print with details at both ends of the scale. **Here is how I determined the proper gamma.** I would shoot 4 shots each

of different scenes, each with different contrasts. I would refer to the gamma sheet of information that accompanied every box of film. I would use their recommended developer and developing times and process the first scenes 4 sheets for different times (according to the gamma sheet.) When the films were dry, I would then print each sheet and examine the results. When I was satisfied that I found a good result, I recorded the exposure and developing time for that particular reading. I did this with all of the other sheets and the various meter evaluations and it worked. I was then able to go out on a shoot of the neighborhood and take pictures on a flat foggy day and know that I had to process my films at a gamma of .90. Then go to the beach at Coney Island and take great shots in blaring sunlight, return to my lab and process these images to a gamma of .65. I was able to process my films at precise gamma's within .05 increments.

The choice of paper is the next step. I personally prefer the rag bond papers and not the RC types. I could never get the saturation of blacks that a quality rag bond **single speed** paper affords.

The main thing to understand is that photographic

paper should be processed to the manufacturer's recommended time in order for a rich black to be achieved. This means that the temperature of the developer must be accurate and also the developer not be spent. Every time you make a test print, some of the power of the developer is lost.

I actually used to make test prints, and when I determined the correct exposure and developing time, I would dump the tray of developer and make a fresh batch. This requires extremely accurate mixtures and observation of the temperature. A simple system for holding the temperature should be used. Place one tray into another and the temperature will hold for a much longer time. Making a quality print requires much dodging and burning. I can count the fingers on both hands in order to find how many straight prints I had made in 45 years.

The method I used was really quite simple. I used a sheet of white formica as a backboard to the sink. It was placed at the appropriate angle. I used reasonably bright illumination so that I could examine the work in progress.

First, I would make a straight print. I would dry it and then, using a black marker, outline areas that needed a burn in. I would estimate the percentage of burn needed and write it in the area. I did

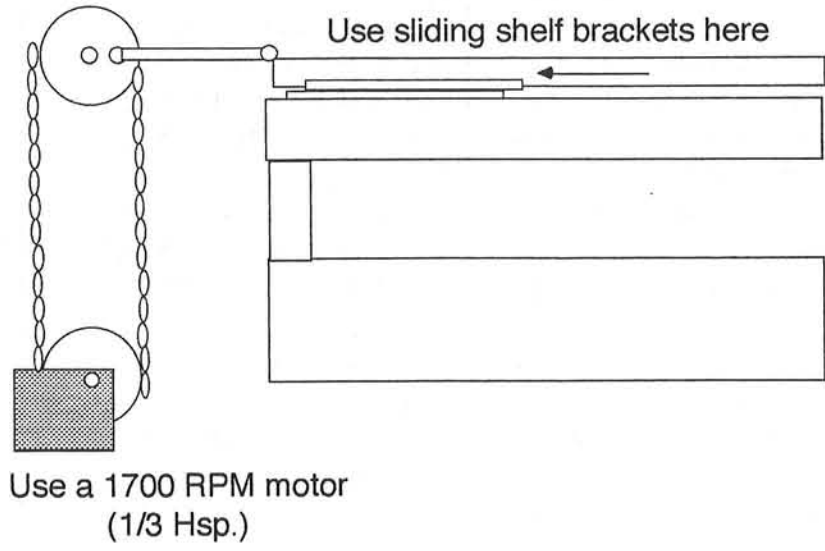
this all over the print. I also marked areas that needed less exposure. (I would mark the area with a minus mark.) When this was done, I produced a new print and included all of the corrections. If the print was satisfactory, I wrapped it up. If I was not satisfied, I made further corrections by marking the areas for the new print. When I was finished, I showed the print to the client. If he was happy, so was I. If not, I had the "map" to guide me to a new print. Using this "map making" system allows you to know what the corrections are in percentages rather than by actual time in seconds. If you make a new print days or even weeks later, you already know what the directions are for making an accurate print. How do you think Ansel Adams was able to reprint so many of his masterpieces at different times?

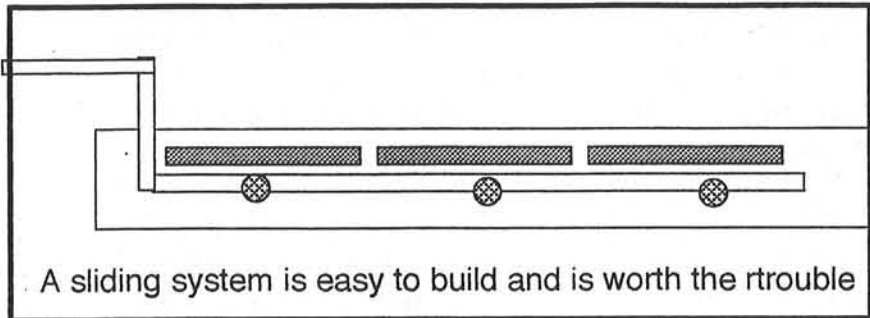
I did it for years. It works.

works. How to develop the paper to it's possible maximum black, with all the smoothness possible? This means that you must have some sort of uniform processing techniques. I used a rocker system or a sliding system in my sink.

I used a 1/3 horsepower 1700 rpm motor and a 100 to 1 ratio gear box. This meant that if I correctly built a rocker system in the bottom of my sink, the tray would tilt or move laterly every 1.7 seconds. This allows you to perfectly slip the print into the developer tray without having to turn it over or handle it too much. All three trays should be in the rocker or sliding system.

The worst thing you can do is contaminate your hands with any foreign substance. Keep the handling of the print to a minimum. Keep a bucket of fresh water nearby so that you can rinse your hands frequently.





A sliding system is easy to build and is worth the trouble

What should you use as a short stop? I recommend using a 1% acetic acid stop bath. The reason is as follows:

It take about 30 to 40 seconds for any fresh liquid (stop bath) to penetrate the thick swollen emulsion of a processed print. In order to really stop the development, give it time to really work. I always used a 30 second stop bath, and drained it thoroughly before I placed it into the fixer. The fixer can be what the manufacturer recommends or a simple acid free fixer such as a 1 quart pot filled with hypo crystals to one gallon of water. Add to this a small capful of potassium metabisulfite. This will preserve the fixer.

What kind of developers are recommended for processing B&W prints? The manufacturer will try to sell all of the chemistry that he can, and will always recommend his own brand. However, most paper developers are about the same. I always liked Kodak's brands of paper developers.

Take your pick. The test of quality will be in how you use whatever chemistry you have in stock. I used to mix my own developer from an old formula from a German darkroom technician.

Washing the final prints should be done with great care.

I strongly recommend the vertical print washers thjat allow the hypo and other contaminates to drop out of the bottom of the washer and rreally wash the prints properly. Zone 6 makes such a product as do many others.

How to adjust the negative, if need be, to compensate for a poor original.

Suppose the negative is too flat even for a #5 paper contrast. It is possible to make by contact, a positive image on film, and use this positive image to make a thin negative that can be added back to the original image, thereby creating a stronger and more contrasty image. This requires registration equipment.

On the other hand, if you have an image that is already too contrasty, then

make by contact, an exposure on a low contrast material such as Kodak's Pan Masking film. Add this back to the original and the contrast will be lowered. This procedure is not recommended for every job, but for emergency use only.

What happens to an image when it is copied? The curve shape of the new negative material tends to distort the image slightly. Copy the new print again and it will further distort the image. Eventually, the highlight areas and the shadow areas begin to travel to meet each other. The image is gone.

It is a good idea to thoroughly dry any test print before making a final print. The quality of the image changes when it is dry as compared to a wet or damp print.

Ansel Adams used a microwave unit to dry his prints before making his final prints regardless of the size. As a result, he had the exact quality in the test and the final print. They matched.

The production of a Dye Transfer print can truly be an art form, rather than just another method of making a print. Is it possible to do all of the dodging and burning usually associated with black and white printing ?

Yes it is. However, caution must be used. Since three matrices are used to produce the colors

and images, any dodging must be done on all three matrices in the exact place and for the exact time otherwise wedging will occur. How can we dodge the same area using three separation negatives and three matrices without getting wedging? The dodging must be done in film form. In other words, the dodge must be a sheet of film with the necessary density added to it so that it can be used (in register) for all three matrices.

The dodge can be made with a piece of opaque film or cardboard, but hard lines will show and defeat the job. However, if a sheet of film is made by using an enlarger as the light source and dodge the film during its exposure, the result will be a sheet of film that can be used as a dodge tool.

A gentleman named Ctein uses a system that is great. He has made many masks with dodging at different places and shapes and he can tape them in place them over his film in the carrier so that it does not interfere with the images sharpness or anything else. He makes various masks with the same shape masking effort but varies the density. So if he wants to expose an area for 50% he adds this mask that is black in the area he needs to increase density, bit has a density level of .15. This will enable him to burn

in an area for a total difference of 50%. If he wants to burn in the same area for 100% he simply adds a mask that has a density of .30. The mask is made using dodging tools and has a very soft edge. He can place as many masks above the carrier as he see fit. If he wants to dodge an area lighter, he makes a mask that is virtually clear except where he need the dodge, Again, he can place more than one mask over the carrier as he sees fit.



This is a simple example of what I am talking about.

Like you, I am awaiting the impending announcement of the rebirth of the Dye Transfer process. Dr. Patterson has spent much time and money to get this fabulous process back to life. The last word I had from the good Doctor is that he is preparing a questionarre that will be mailed out to thousands of interested enthusiasts. Depending on the response that he receives, he will know what king of a matrix run will be made. Dr. Patterson has already formed a company called "The Dye Transfer Com-

pany." He will order and warehouse the matrix, the dyes and the receiver sheets. As far as I know, instead of making the developers and other chemicals available in prepared form, formulas will be given out. I have used the formulas for years, and this is the only way to insure fresh chemistry and eliminate fogging caused by oxidized Pyrogallic acid.

A few people have asked me about the possible return of Pan Matrix film. It look as if this is also a definite possibility The company that will be manufacturing the film thinks it is worth investigating .

Do you remember my talking about a possible article about my reconstruction of an outtake transparency of Norma Jean, (later known as Marilyn Monroe. This particular transparency was never used for the calendar that launched Marilyn Monroe to stardom.

I was given the transparency by Tom Kelley, the great photographer that shot the series of images. The transparency was shot on Ektachrome1 or 2 during the late 1940's and was faded very badly. Tom asked if I could do something with the transparency as the original shot that was used was lost. I told him I would look into it. I moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco and had forgotten

about the transparency and promise I had made to Tom. Then I was informed by Tom Jr. that his dad had died. I felt as though I had not kept my promise to him. When I retired and moved to Victorville, CA. I decided to work on this project. I eventually came up with a method for reconstruction and it worked great. I was able to make a new transparency that had the luster and color of the original. I presented this article and all of the parts that made it work to 10 different photographic magazines. They all refused to run the story because they said that they did not print nudes. Finally, one magazine said that they would run the story and compare what I did with what the digitized system could create. It took almost 2 years for them to "run" the story. It is in the magazine called "Camera and Darkroom." Issue of April 1995 Page 62. They didn't even run the method that I used. They just showed the original, my version and that of a computerized system. They did not explain what I did but just said that my version and the digitized versions were both O.K. but different. I am dissatisfied. The colors in the magazine didn't even come close to what I had presented to them. So, I have all of the materials back in my possession and I plan to make up a small

brochure of about 30 pages that will display the original and my reconstruction and all of the steps that it took to accomplish the task. I will let you all know when this is ready.

Incidentally, EverColor Corp. has unveiled a new system of producing great color prints. It is called EverGraph. They still use the 4 color screened separation negative system, but expose it on their own proprietary photographic paper. The results are nearly equal to the fantastic high end pigment process, however they can only claim a life expectancy of 50 years compared to the pigment prints archival 200 plus years.

These new EverGraph prints can have added text and can be produced as posters with photo composition techniques and with runs as high as 300 prints. This is a boon to the display houses that require great photographic images and can not afford to produce much lower quality and have too high a run necessity. EverColor is making great headway into the field of fine art photography. The prints are immaculate and capture all of the transparencies nuances. The photographic artist is usually on hand to make any changes deemed necessary to make a complete and accurate statement with his work.

This is the only company that is happy to invite the photographer to their lab to become an integral part of the print making decisions.

When I had my Dye Transfer company, we were usually left on our own and were expected to come up with masterpieces. We usually did a great job. But whenever I did work for any of the fine artists, such as Kelley, Penn, Karsh, Halsman, Avedon and many others, I had them visit my lab at the tail end of the process so that they could inject their own thoughts about what they were after. It worked so well that we had the same top clients for many years.

Incidentally, for those of you whose subscriptions are about to run out, **I have an offer for you. For all new subscribers I will present you with my first book on Photocomposition.**

The book details the production of complicated photographic assembly. It is 106 pages long and is valued at \$50. It is another way for me to say thanks for the support that I have enjoyed for these past few years.

One of my former associates in the Dye Transfer business Haunt Rama of Frog Prince, has joined a San Francisco company called Frieg and the new company is called, **Frog Prince/Frieg.** They are able to make Dye Transfer prints and Type C prints, of course and all of the other

services that a full fledged company can do. The new company has purchased a high end Mac Computer and a high end scanner and is able to make manipulated images with relative ease. They also have the capability to make prints without an enlarger, but rather directly from the computer. If you recall, in my last issue I spoke about the emergence of a company that is able to make prints up to 30x40 without the need for a darkroom or an enlarger. The time has arrived when the disappearance of the darkroom is beginning. Of course, I am speaking about the commercial darkroom. It is already possible to make the actual printing plates directly from the computer. This means that there is no necessity for screened film negatives but just the information planted by lasers and the set of 4 color screened plates are completed. Much of my mail has to do with finding out where densitometers can be bought without mortgaging the homestead. I have found many companies that offer such things as densitometers, lenses, easel meters, hard to find enlargers, and all of the other paraphernalia that is associated with the world of color printing. One such source is a magazine called "HorseTrader."

You can subscribe to it by mailing your information to them at PO Box 11712 Santa Ana, California. 92711

In this publication you will find ads for every conceivable item used in the lithographic field. The latest information about where to get first class screened negatives made for a very good price. If you are in the mood to try the new Pigment processes, you will need a vacuum frame and an ultraviolet light source. There are pages and pages of items listed for sale in good condition. Another source for finding used equipment is in the ad section of darkroom magazines such as **Darkroom and Creative Camera**, and **Camera and Darkroom**. Both of these magazines cater to the hand's on enthusiast and run ads that list various equipment for sale. If you are in the market for a densitometer, don't overspend your money on an item that need not be that sophisticated. All you need for either Dye Transfer or Cibachrome printing is a black and white densitometer. All you are measuring is the density differences, not the color differences. Your money is better spent on a good easel meter. I have been writing about the Wallace Fisher Meter. Unfortunately, it has been discontinued.

However, ZBE in Santa Barbara, CA has an easel meter with even more density range and for about the same price. This is your most important piece of equipment, besides the enlarger and lenses.

If you need a film grey scale and find it hard to find, contact any film processing lab and ask for one. These scales are usually sold as quality control items. These strips are processed along with a run in order to monitor the quality of the processing chemicals. They are discarded at the end of their use. The grey scale portion of the test strip could be cut apart and used as a control device in your own masking system. The price is right.

For those of you who may be considering getting into the digitized field, let me fill you in on the prices of the new digitized cameras. The Nikon F90 equipped with Kodak's lists for \$27,000 plus. The NC digital camera offers to the newspaper photographers lists for \$15,000 and up to \$28,000. Keep your camera. It's a bargain.

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